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Use of English language by Kosova Youth

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Abstract

Due to political situation in Kosova, Serb and Albanian youth are still distanced from each other and do not learn the language of each other though they are both official languages in Kosova. This situation is leading to misunderstandings, uncertainty and feeling unsafe in many aspects of everyday life. Furthermore, it is leading to social separation of ethnicities what is making a large gap in joint efforts to develop Kosova and improve existing deficiencies, in order for Kosova to become a prosperous multicultural society. Albanian and Serb youth communicate in English language so that English Language, in these regions, has expanded from its previous function as a sign of prestige and necessity for people who want to get educated or work abroad, to the main tool of communication between the two ethnicities. The study results determine students' preferences, their level of intercultural competence and English language proficiency. It also proof hypothesis that all students from particular communities have low level of intercultural competence, they have similar preferences, but focusing on their ethnicity, furthermore, their level of English language proficiency is similar. This study covers 316 Albanian and 171 Serb students from high school students from various cities in Kosova.

Keywords: interculturalism; Kosova; cultural differences; communication; English language.

1. Introduction

In order to understand contemporary situation in Kosova education the brief recent history of education in Kosova is presented below.

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1.1. Isolation of ethnicities who live in Kosova due the war, political and social crisis

During the 1990s, “Albanians rejected the Serbian curriculum that had been adopted by the Serbian Educational Council. This was the pretext for the regime to use Serbian police forces to forbid Albanian access to their schools. Thousands of Albanian professors and students from primary to university level were dismissed, only Serbs were allowed to have access to the public schools.” [1]. Kastrati continues arguing “After the Albanians were forced into a completely separate social life, walls of division appeared between the two communities, and Kosova developed two extremely segregated systems of education, which have remained almost the same into the present.” [1].

1.2. Parallel living of both ethnicities

Serbs and Albanians again live in parallel ‘worlds’. They have parallel governing; parallel education system and parallel healthcare though officially both communities accepted Kosova government and participated in elections held in Kosova and chose their representatives. “Parallel system of education for Albanians on one side and Serbia’s state curriculums imposed for Kosova Serbs on the other side during the 1990’s have had a direct impact in establishing a completely segregated and divisive education system in Kosova after the war of 1998-1999.” [1].

1.3. Lack of readiness to cooperate between each other

“In both Kosova Albanian and Kosova Serb majority areas, the Kosova and the Serbian educational systems seclude Kosova Serb and Kosova Albanian students from the surrounding social environment of the majority community, as much as they ensure education in the mother tongue. In this way, education perpetrates and reinforces separation.” [2].

1.4. Lack of possibility for children to communicate with children of other ethnicity

The report showed, “Even in the isolated cases in which students of these communities attend education under the same roof, separate educational shifts are in place, and with few exceptions, there is no interaction between students of the Kosova Albanian and Kosova Serb communities. The fact that Kosova Serb students learn only Serbian and Kosova Albanian students learn only Albanian further prevents communication.” [2].

1.5. Very low level of applying intercultural approach in Kosova schools

According to Rexhepi and Demaj “The two educational systems have, in fact, contributed to entrench the chasm which divides communities in Kosova. That both Kosova Albanian and Serbian textbooks tend to present a slanted and one-sided view of history is a case in point. They do not confine themselves to present a history of Kosova, but tend to be more geared toward presenting the history of either the Albanian or the Serb community.” [3]. They also claim that “Kosova Albanian history school books focus on ethnic Albanian protagonists, while Slavs are said to have come to “Albanian lands” where they fought, pillaged, destroyed and assimilated proto-Albanian tribes (except in Kosova and Albania). [3]. Moreover, “Serbian textbooks present

Kosova as the ‘Cradle of the Serbian Nation’ and underline that Kosova Albanians have come from Albania.” [4]. “Kosova institutions and international community have failed to offer an integrated and homogenous school curriculum both for Kosova Albanians and Serbs. ... Consequently, the formation of ethnically based identity among younger generations remains a natural alternative and as a result both ethnic and national identities play important roles in guiding their political behavior.” [1].

1.6. Definition of main concepts

- Multiculturalism is cultural diversity of human society, considering language, religion, values and socioeconomic circumstances [5].
- Interculturalism expresses interaction of various cultures and belief that every man becomes richer through contacts with other cultures [5].

1.7. Subject of the Study

- Determine the level of intercultural competences of high school students of both ethnicities, Serb and Albanian.
- Determine if the students of both ethnicities have similar preferences toward the various aspects of life
- Determine the level of English language proficiency of Albanian and Serb students at high schools in Kosova

1.8. Research Questions

- Do the Serb and Albanian students have similar preferences toward the various aspects of life?
- What is the level of intercultural competences of students of both ethnicities, Serb and Albanian?
- What is the level of English language proficiency of Albanian and Serb students at high schools in Kosova?

1.9. Research Hypothesis

- The Serb and Albanian high school students have similar preferences toward the various aspects of life.
- The level of intercultural competences of students of both ethnicities, Serb and Albanian is very low.
- The level of English language proficiency is low, but similar to Albanian and Serb students at high schools in Kosova.

2. Methods

2.1. Research instruments: in this research, as instruments were used

Questionnaire

- Questionnaire Part One, 10 questions regarding students preferences
- Questionnaire Part Two, 10 questions regarding intercultural competences

ESL Tests,

- Test 1 for 10th grade Albanian students and 1st year Serb students
- Test 2 for 11th grade Albanian students and 2nd year Serb students
- Test 3 for 12th grade Albanian students and 3rd and 4th year Serb students

2.2. Participants: in this research, the participants were high school students from Kosova towns: Ferizaj, Firaža, Shterpce, Kamenica, Gjilani, Shillove, Prizren and Peja

316 Albanian students of:

10th grade, Total: 142, male: 54 and female: 88

11th grade, Total: 147, male: 62 and female: 85

12th grade, Total: 27, male: 12 and female: 15

171 Serb students of: 1st year, Total: 48, male: 19 and female: 29

2nd year, Total: 57, male: 29 and female: 28

3rd year, Total: 46, male: 21 and female: 25

4th year, Total: 20, male: 11 and female: 9

According to Bennet stages of intercultural competences are: Denial; Defense; Minimizing; Acceptance; Adaption and Integration [6]

Coding guideline for determination of intercultural sensitivity :

$[(3P. \times \text{Students No.}) + (2P. \times \text{Students No.}) + (1P. \times \text{Students No.})] / \text{Total Students No.}$

Sum of average points: 10 – 12.00 Denial

12.01 – 16 Defense

16.01 – 20 Minimizing

20.01 – 24 Acceptance

24.01 – 28 Adaption

28.01– 30 Integration

3. Findings

3.1. Questionnaire Part One

The goal of the Questionnaire Part One was to determine mutual points of various aspects of students' life. Taking in consideration answers of all students the mutual elements are presented as following.

- Mutual professions of Albanian and Serb students: healthcare and education (all grades).
- Mutual hobbies: none (grade 10 and 1st year), playing football (grade 11 and 2nd year; grade 12 and 3rd year), watching movies (grade 12 and 3rd year), reading (grade 12 and 4th year)
- Mutual music bands or singers: none (all grades).
- Mutual favorite sports: football, volleyball, tennis and basketball (all grades)
- Mutual travel destinations: USA and France (grade 10 and 1st year; grade 11 and 2nd year, grade 12 and 3rd year), Dubai (grade 11 and 2nd year, grade 12 and 3rd year), Italy (grade 12 and 3rd year)
- Need for change in Kosova: everything, create more jobs, invest in production (all grades), educational system (grade 11 and 2nd year)
- Mutual preferred century to live: in the past (all grades except Albanian students 12th grade: present)
- Mutual favorite TV Programs: none
- Mutual social networks used mostly: Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp

3.2. Questionnaire Part Two, Intercultural Sensitivity

Table 1: The answers of the Albanian students on Questionnaire Part Two

ALBANIAN STUDENTS												
Question	Grade 10 with 142 students			Avera-ge	Grade 11 with 147 students			Average	Grade 12 with 27 students			Average
	Points				Points				Points			
	3	2	1		3	2	1		3	2	1	
11	54	67	32	2.14	58	53	36	2.15	14	5	8	2.22
12	18	31	104	1.44	17	25	105	1.40	1	6	20	1.30
13	79	57	17	2.41	92	39	16	2.48	18	7	2	2.59
14	49	62	31	1.97	47	59	41	2.04	9	11	7	2.07
15	93	32	26	2.41	87	26	34	2.36	8	4	15	1.74
16	79	36	38	2.27	86	36	25	2.17	12	7	8	2.15
17	63	52	38	2.16	64	45	38	2.18	15	8	4	2.40
18	21	65	67	1.70	29	55	63	1.77	3	3	21	1.33
19	89	49	15	2.48	94	40	13	2.55	19	6	2	2.63
20	62	27	64	1.99	61	26	60	2.00	11	12	4	2.26
Total	607	478	432	20.97	635	404	491	21.10	110	68	91	20.69

Table 2: The answers of the Serbian students on Questionnaire Part Two

Serb Students																
Question	Year 1 with 48 students				Year 2 with 57 students				Year 3 with 46 students				Year 4 with 20 students			
	Points				Points				Points				Points			
	3	2	1	Average	3	2	1	Average	3	2	1	Average	3	2	1	Average
11	4	5	29	1.47	3	9	5	1.26	6	1	29	1.5	2	12	6	1.8
12		4	4	1.08	3	4	0	1.19	2	1	3	1.11	0	0	20	1
13	16	8	4	2.04	5	0	2	1.88	0	7	9	2.02	6	11	3	2.15
14		2	6	1.46	3	3	1	1.51	5	5	6	1.54	0	11	9	1.55
15	26	8	4	2.25	3	0	4	1.98	4	3	9	1.67	1	3	6	2.25
16	24	9	5	2.19	5	4	8	2.12	3	7	6	1.93	0	3	7	2.15
17		3	5	1.27	0	6	1	1.28	4	4	8	1.26	0	2	18	1.1
18	11	8	9	1.83	9	7	1	1.78	5	9	2	1.63	5	4	11	1.7
19	7	9	32	1.48	7	7	3	1.54	3	1	2	1.37	0	8	12	1.4
20	11	9	28	1.65	9	6	42	1.42	4	3	9	1.24	13	1	6	2.35
Tot.	99	25	56	16.72	7	46	86	15.96	6	11	83	15.27	7	55	98	17.45

As it can be seen in the tables T1 and T2, Albanian students were on the stage presented below:

- Grade 10: stage of ACCEPTANCE (20.97)
- Grade 11: stage of ACCEPTANCE (21.10)
- Grade 12 : stage of ACCEPTANCE (20.69)

Furthermore, Serb students were on the stage presented below:

- 1st Year: stage of MINIMIZING (16.72)
- 2nd Year: stage of DEFENSE (15.96)
- 3rd Year: stage of DEFENSE (15.27)
- 4th Year: stage of MINIMIZING (17.45)

Coding guidelines of Test Assessment:

20 questions, each right answer 1 point.

Total 20 points.

1 – 5 Rated 1 (failed)

6 – 9 Rated 2 (poor/satisfactory)

10 – 13 Rated 3 (good)

14 – 17 Rated 4 (very good)

18 – 20 Rated 5 (excellent)

3.3. Test Results

Table 3: Test results, Albanian students

ALBANIAN								
No. of stud.	Grade	Test	Grading					
			1	2	3	4	5	Average
142	10	1	1	25	74	42		3.11
147	11	2	30	72	15	3		1.57
27	12	3	4	8	10	4		2.44
Total Average								2.37

Table 4: Test results, Serb students

SERB								
No. of studentsr	Year	Test	Grading					
			1	2	3	4	5	Average
48	1	1	0	20	25	3		2.65
57	2	2	11	33	13			2.03
46	3	3	7	14	20	5		2.5
20	4	3	3	4	6	6	1	2.9
Total Average								2.52

4. Conclusion

4.1. Questionnaire Part 1

From the answers, it can be understood that students of all ethnicities prefer various professions what mirrors their individuality, but there were also mutual professions preferred by majority of students, as education, in health system and construction. These answers were understandable if we take in consideration socioeconomic situation in Kosova. These 3 professions, teachers, doctors and architects have very good salaries and were respected from other community members. Majority of Serb, Bosnian and Turk students showed uncertainty toward their future in Kosovo society answering they want to continue studying without specifying in what faculty or what profession. It seemed they were not certain about their plans for the future since they did not see what opportunity Kosova can offer them. This fact can be used to design English language classes which will cover many interesting professions which are needed for developing Kosovo Economy, but also attractive for students. Their mutual hobbies they practice as listening to the music, playing football, drawing, and reading can be used to design discussions about them, but also presenting other possible hobbies applicable in their homes,

and quite attractive for students taking in consideration economic situation of the most families. Music the students listen was from their own ethnic group or translated in their own language. This fact can be used in lessons as presentation of their own Music to other Ethnicities. Students' favorite sports were the same as football, volleyball, basketball, tennis, swimming. The English language lessons can cover biographies of famous athletes from the disciplines, description of game rules and their variation according to different ethnicities. As a travel destination great majority of students chose developed, wealth places which are multinational. This fact can be used in lessons as comparing those multiethnic societies with Kosovo society. Creating discussions, about what Kosovo needs to become prosperous democratic society. The students attitude toward today's Kosovo showed that they are not satisfied and they feel need for change in education system, human rights, economy, and Serb student would like to join Kosovo to Serbia. This facts can be used in lessons as tasks which the students would accomplish in groups creating programs which can help changing defects in education system, health system, laws.... , and also to give opportunity to Serb students, to design a plan which will advance Kosovo so that there would not be need for Kosovo to join any other country. The majority of students would like to live in past what shows their hesitation toward meeting unknown from the future. By improving living conditions and enforcing the legal system in order to provide citizens with comfort and safety, the students would be more certain and open toward better future. These facts will be used in English language lessons so that they will be asked, from appoint in the past, to imagine how they would like present and future to be. How would they create historical events and new history of Kosova. At the answers, TV programs were mixed with TV channels what did not give the accurate statistic data, but the answers actually gave clear information that students of all ethnicities watched mostly TV programs and TV channels from their own ethnic group or they were translated in their own language. As social networks, Kosovo students from all Ethnicities use the same, so actual information from these networks can be used in lessons by creating discussions about contemporary information from these networks.

Regarding **the first hypothesis**, *All students from the high schools in Kosovo have similar interests in particular aspects of life.* The 2nd hypothesis was proven. Since, according to answers students from both communities have similar interest in every questioned preference except of music and TV programs they follow. They all chose mostly the music of the musicians who are members of their own ethnic group and the TV Programs broadcasted in their own language.

4.2. Questionnaire Part 2

Answers on questions of Questionnaire Part 2 were used for gathering information about the students' level of intercultural sensitivity. The points which determine the level of intercultural sensitivity were sums of averages of answered questions 11 – 20. They were calculated for each school year and each ethnicity separately.

Answers from Questionnaire Part 2 gave clear picture of intercultural sensitivity of the students. From the findings, it can be seen that Albanian (39%) students from 11th grade speak more than 2 foreign languages as well as Albanian (52%) students from 12th grade. Albanian 10th grade (38%) and as Serb 4 year students (60%) speak 1 foreign language actually English while other students speak only their language. Majority of Albanian (72%) and Serb (92%) students would live among their ethnic groups.

Both ethnicities, except Serb 2nd (92%) year students, would work together with other ethnicities. While most Albanian (42%) students would have diner in other ethnicity's restaurants, most Serb (54%) students prefer restaurants of their own ethnic groups.

Even if they knew the language of others, Serb 2nd (42%) and 3rd (63%) year students would not greet others with that language, other students would greet other with their language, and the results show that all students were more open if they would work together.

Majority of Serb students (77%) from all school years would not attend the school with other ethnic groups. Other students do not mind doing it. Also, majority of all students claim there are no cultural features of their ethnic groups in current textbooks.

Only Serb (64%) students were not interested in learning from textbooks where are cultural features of communities which live in Kosova applied. Majority of all students refuse the idea that English language become official language in Kosova.

Answers of Albanian students showed that they were in the stage of Acceptance in all three grades.

They were aware of cultural differences but they accepted them and had opinion that no culture was better or worse than other and they were aware that there were other systems of values and believe which should be respected by other ethnicities. Answers of Serb students showed that students of the first and fourth year are in the stages of Minimizing of Differences.

That means they are aware of cultural differences of ethnicities that live in Kosovo, but their opinion is that all people are the same, they have physiological similarities, also similar basic human need, for example, for water, food and shelter.

For them, culture is way of living of particular communities caused by their environment, history and it is not important for intercultural interaction. The students from the second and third year were in the stage of Defense.

They are aware of cultural differences, but they consider them as a threat to their identity so that they fight against them. Furthermore, they emphasize and exaggerate the positive characteristics of their own culture; they also believe that their culture should be a model for the rest of the world.

Regarding **the second hypothesis**, *All students from particular communities have low level of intercultural competence.* by analyzing the answers of Questionnaire Part 2 it could be determined that the second hypothesis was proven.

4.3. Tests

In the Table 4, there is presented ranking list of grade averages of the tests.

Table 1: Ranking of grade averages of the tests

TESTS					
TEST 1		TEST 2		TEST 3	
Students	Grade	Students	Grade	Students	Grade
Albanian	10 th grade	Serb	2.03	Serb 4 th year	2.9
3.11					
Serb 1 st year	2.65	Albanian	1.76	Serb 3 rd year	2.5
				Albanian	12 th grade
				2.44	

The ranking list (see Table 4) of grade averages of the tests showed that the highest average of the Test 1 was achieved by 10th grade Albanian students (3.11) followed by Serb (2.65) students. The highest average in Test 2 achieved Serb (2.03) students followed by Albanian (1.76) students. Again, the Serb students of the 4th year achieved the highest average (2.9) followed by Serb the 3th year (2.5) and Albanian (2.44) students.

According the test results Test 1 passed 99.3% of Albanian students, Test 2 passed 61.2% and Test 3 passed 85.2%. test 1 completed by Serb students passed 100%, Test 2 passed 80.7%, and Test 3 passed 84.8% Serb students of the 3rd year and 85% of the 4th year

In the Table 5, there is presented ranking list of percentages of the students who passed the tests.

Table 5: Ranking of the percentages of the students who passed the tests

TESTS					
TEST 1		TEST 2		TEST 3	
Students	%	Students	%	Students	%
Serb	100%	Serb	80.7%	Albanian	85,2%
Albanian	99.3%	Albanian	61.2%	Serb 3 rd year	85.0%
				Serb 4 th year	84.8%

From the Table 5, it can be seen that Serb students from the 1st and 2nd year were on top of the ranking list while Serb students from the 3rd and 4th year were on the second and the third place behind Albanian students.

The test results showed that English language proficiency from all grades and all schools was average; most students were assessed with 2 and 3. However, the average grade was quite low for all ethnicities and all school years (2.2). taking this fact in consideration, the additional ESL textbooks should be designed using language one grade lower than current ESL textbooks in order to fit to English language proficiency of majority of students. On the other hand, they need to offer opportunity for better students to increase the difficulty of exercises in order to meet their level of English language proficiency.

Regarding **the third hypothesis**, *The level of English language proficiency is lower than expected according to current EL course books*. This hypothesis was also proven since the results of the tests showed that the English language proficiency of the students was average or slightly below the average.

5. Recommendations

Information from this study should be used in Kosova and Serbian Curricula in order to fill communication gap between the ethnicities that live in Kosova. The Serbian and Kosova ministries of education should create a joint group of English language teachers, psychologists and sociologists from Serb and Albanian community who will design the new English Language textbooks that contain many features of cultures of ethnicities that live in Kosova, in order to increase intercultural level of them. Those textbooks will be additional to already existing textbooks. They can be designed using the facts from this study. Since the school year contains 9 months and Improving English, English Language for 1st year, English Language for the 3rd and 4th year contained 9 units; ESL textbooks should contain 9 Units. Average number of reading and listening tasks per unit should be around 6. Category of the culture should be source culture, but texts should be written in EL. Type of the culture and themes should be justified to current types of the culture and themes, but with elements of source cultures. Moreover, the joint themes should be matter of discussion, but other themes presented in only one of the EL textbooks should be used for presentation, in addition at the end of the Unit should be a quiz or questionnaire which would stimulate students to learn about source cultures presented in that unit.

5.1. The aims of this research

The first aim of this research was to finding out level of intercultural competences of the high school students in Kosova. Since everyday life in Kosova is largely influenced by contemporary politics, as well as economic and safety uncertainty all ethnic groups that live there are focused on their own group, showing lack of trust and willingness for joint living with the others.

The second aim of this research was to investigate the students' preferences toward various aspects of life. Since the students live in the same area, Kosova, it is understandable that they have many common elements in their everyday life as sports, hobby, preferred professions and similar ideas how to improve living circumstances.

Regarding the third aim of the research, the studied textbooks used in Kosova and recommended by both Ministries of Education consist of similar themes; those themes can be used for designing the additional ESL textbooks with reading and comprehension tasks with the same themes as current ESL textbooks, but with reading tasks that include features of source cultures.

5.2. Additional ESL textbooks

Taking in consideration all findings from this research, it would be recommendable to design an ESL textbook with reading materials for each school grade as appendices of current EL textbooks applied at high schools. The appendices should contain texts with English language difficulty one level lower than current EL text books, for example, for the tenth grade elementary level should be used, for the eleventh grade pre-intermediate level and for the twelfth grade intermediate level of English language difficulty. The vocabulary should be adjusted to the main text books. The mutual preferences of the students can be used in texts as themes for discussion while topics from field of music and TV Programs can be used for their presentation with quiz questions after each chapter. Texts should be politically neutral, without belittling or expressions that can cause any negative feelings

or misunderstanding to any of ethnicities.

Since the school year contains 9 months and Improving English, English Language for the 3rd and 4th year contain 9 units, designed ESL textbooks should contain 9 Units. Average number of reading and listening tasks per unit should be around 4, one for each week, since number of English language classes is 2 per week. It means there should be about 36 units per school year. Category of the culture should be source culture, but texts should be written in English language. Type of the culture and themes should be justified to current types of the culture and themes, but with elements of source cultures. Moreover, the joint themes should be matter of discussion, but other themes presented in only one of the EL textbooks should be used for presentation. Moreover, at the end of the Unit should be a quiz or questionnaire which would stimulate students to learn about source cultures presented in that unit.

In addition, at the school managements should bring intentionally together people from different ethnicities as for example in competition held in their municipality between schools from the same municipality, then from the same region, and finally competition held for winning schools from all Kosova. These multinational gatherings would “reduce fear, increase understanding, engage in dialogue, share experiences and create new ideas.” [7]. There are activities that can be practiced at schools according to Ballantyne:

- Development of activities which reduce ‘fixed’ concepts of culture, ethnicity and religion –we are all as individuals, more than only our religion, ethnicity or culture. Our culture, religion and ethnicity are not fixed but are impacted on by our interactions with others and their interactions with us.
- Activities to develop necessary skills to benefit from diversity – we may need to develop our confidence and skills to feel comfortable meeting and sharing experiences with people who are not like us – and help to develop the skills and confidence of others so they are comfortable meeting and sharing with others.
- Development of spaces ‘of’ and ‘for’ intercultural dialogue –a focus on using community facilities for the purposes of facilitating dialogue and relationships between people from different cultural, language and faith backgrounds [7].

It's important to address different issues when tackling the issue of culture such as: identity, language, ethnicity, and social class because they are thoroughly related topics which need to be analyzed altogether if we are interested in understanding students' cultures and identities.

6. Limitation of the study

The study was conducted as it was planed, but only one class of high school students per school took place as participants. The study should be conducted also with university students and adults of both ethnic groups.

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